

## REASSESSING U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY: THE KURDISTAN WORKER'S PARTY (PKK)

BY

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**REASSESSING U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY: THE KURDISTAN  
WORKER'S PARTY (PKK)**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

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The Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK), a terrorist-insurgent group with ties to lucrative transnational criminal organizations throughout Europe, continues to threaten Turkey-Iraq regional stability by attacking Turkish Security Forces and non-supportive civilians. Recent attacks have forced the U.S. to initiate diplomacy and intelligence sharing actions to pacify Turkish aggression, but these efforts will not suffice as a long-term strategy. To reaffirm regional stability the U.S. needs to reassess its current strategies and policies. The intent of this paper is to identify the nature of the threat and the need for an aggressive-synergistic national and multi-national strategy to eliminate the PKK.



## REASSESSING U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY: THE KURDISTAN WORKER'S PARTY (PKK)

After nearly three decades, the Kurdistan Worker's Party or PKK,<sup>1</sup> an insurgent-terrorist group, continues to conduct numerous terrorist actions against the Turkish security forces, civilians, and other Kurdish nationals in the name of Kurdish autonomy. This desire for autonomy, funded primarily from lucrative transnational criminal activities in Europe, is increasing tension in the Turkey-Iraq region, which threatens regional stability. Consequently, "Turkey has demanded nothing less than the complete elimination of the PKK from northern Iraq."<sup>2</sup> The U.S. response, "On November 5, President George Bush promised Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan that Washington would work closely with Turkish and Iraqi authorities to eradicate the PKK presence in northern Iraq."<sup>3</sup> Implementing an eradication policy is a complex and time-consuming endeavor involving the commitment and synchronization of resources and assets within national and international communities. As U.S. policy makers reassess current strategies and the level of U.S. involvement-support against the PKK, issues remain unresolved and terrorist attacks continue.

Mitchel P. Roth and Murat Sever (2007) noted, "There are at least a dozen terrorist organizations active in Turkey...and the PKK heads this list as the most influential terrorist organization with the ability to cause social upheaval."<sup>4</sup> Historically, however, allegations of repression and violent tactics against the Kurds attracted negative media attention for Turkey, thus, forcing the Turkish government to make concessions in order to gain favor with the international community. Consequently, a sense of societal acrimony remains. Some could speculate that for these reasons the



U.S. avoided intervention; however, the situation changed due to the Iraq war and the President's position concerning terrorist organizations. According to the U.S. National Security Strategy (2006):

A government has no higher obligation than to protect the lives and livelihoods of its citizens. The hard core of terrorists cannot be deterred or reformed; they must be tracked down, killed, or captured. They must be cut off from the network of individuals and institutions on which they depend for support. That network must in turn be deterred, disrupted, and disabled using a broad range of goals.<sup>5</sup>

This strategy statement supports government intervention on behalf of its society; however, it does not specify the level of U.S. involvement. If the U.S. fails to implement an adequate national strategy to support the eradication of the PKK, the U.S. and its allies could face regional destabilization, which corresponds to more terrorist attacks and increases in PKK transnational criminal activities. In addressing this alarming situation, this paper will examine current U.S. strategy towards the PKK, Turkey, Iraq, and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG);<sup>6</sup> identify the nature of the PKK threat; and prescribe several alternatives and recommendations to eradicate the PKK through implementation of the elements of national power and international support to maintain regional stability.

### The Beginning - PKK

PKK roots date back to 1974 when a Turkish-Kurd national, Abdullah Ocalan, founded a Kurdish insurgency, known then as Kongra Gel. A believer in Marxist-Leninist doctrine, he focused insurgent activities to establish a free Kurdish state in southeastern Turkey. In 1978, Ocalan changed the insurgency's name to the PKK. By 1984, the PKK had gained substantial support to initiate a campaign of armed violence-terrorism against Turkey.<sup>7</sup> In the early 1990s, the PKK changed its tactics from rural insurgency

targets to urban terrorism and suicide bombing. As a terrorist organization, it became heavily dependent on lucrative illegal trafficking and money-laundering activities primarily in Western Europe.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, the PKK pursued legitimate business venues by purchasing “cultural clubs, political offices, and publishing ventures,” throughout Europe.<sup>9</sup>

Today, PKK insurgent-terrorist forces base out of the Kandil Mountains in northeastern Iraq, not far from the Iranian and Turkish borders. It uses these bases for “political training, media, and war planning centers.”<sup>10</sup> Although the actual PKK insurgent-terrorist group is relatively small, numbering in the low thousands, they still receive support from a large Kurdish expatriate population. This is a concern because the Kurdish population numbers approximately 25 million people, living predominately in Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria. Considered one of the world’s largest ethnic groups, the Kurds remain a stateless society.<sup>11</sup>

As the fighting continues, the casualty count between Kurds and Turks steadily increases. According to Daniel Fata, currently Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Europe and NATO, since 1975 PKK violence resulted in over 30,000 military and civilian deaths, 600 of which occurred in 2006.<sup>12</sup> The methods employed by the PKK involve terror as the principle means to convey their intent. According to the CRS Report for Congress (2004), “The PKK used suicide bombings, car bombings, kidnapping of foreign tourists, and attacks against Turkish diplomats in Europe.”<sup>13</sup> From 1995-1999, the PKK conducted over 15 high-profile suicide bombings, mostly against Turkish military targets, conducted political assassinations, and instigated riots within Iraq and Turkey.<sup>14</sup> On January 3, 2008, a terrorist bombing occurred in the city of

Diyarbakir; a predominately-Kurdish city located in the southeastern region of Turkey. The bombing killed five civilian bystanders and wounded over 60 civilians and soldiers. After the incident Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan, who blamed the PKK for the bombing, stated, Turkey “will continue with the same determination” to fight the PKK even beyond its own borders.<sup>15</sup>

### U.S. Regional Strategy

For over half a century an alliance existed between the U.S. and Turkey; however, today a sense of trepidation exists between the two governments. The Turkish government adamantly opposed U.S. intervention in Iraq due to the effects the war would have on promoting Kurdish autonomy and allowing a safe haven for the PKK, however, it did allow the movement of logistical support through its borders into northern Iraq. In an effort to mitigate tensions, Turkey supported the premise that Kurdish-Peshmerga and U.S. troops in northern Iraq would confront the estimated 5,000 PKK insurgents in northern Iraq. To the Turks’ dismay this did not occur.<sup>16</sup> In response to this dismay, the Turkish government decided to position a large Turkish military force along its border with Iraq threatening intervention if the PKK situation remains unresolved.

Metz (2007) noted, “At the strategic level, the risk to the United States is not that insurgents will “win” in the traditional sense, take over their country, and shift it from a partner to an enemy. It is that complex internal conflicts, especially ones involving insurgency, will generate other adverse effects: the destabilization of regions, resource flows, and markets; the blossoming of transnational terrorism; humanitarian disasters;

and so forth.”<sup>17</sup> This is a valid concern to U.S. policy makers because these effects directly correspond to PKK terrorist actions within the Turkey-Iraq region and in Europe.

Although tensions remain, the U.S. government remains resolute in its efforts to secure the fragile nation state of Iraq, and one area gaining success is in northern Iraq. The reason for this is the U.S. continues to provide a sense of regional security in northern Iraq. Sabrina Tavernise (2007) noted, “As the war has worsened, the United States has come to depend increasingly on the Kurds as partners in running Iraq and as overseers of the one part of the country where some of their original aspirations are actually being met.”<sup>18</sup> However, this ostensibly does not sit well with Turkish officials and senior members of their military who continue to fight the PKK insurgency.

For decades, the U.S. avoided the challenges associated with the Kurds and in so doing missed opportunities, which would have alleviated Kurdish problems and the PKK.<sup>19</sup> The affects from the “hands off approach” then has now spawned what some consider today as a highly volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous environment. Not much had changed by 2004, when Deputy Assistant Secretary Bryza (2004) stated, “The U.S. Government is trying to respond to Turkey in a way in which the U.S. is not the story; not participants; we are observers; observers who care very much about what happens in Turkey.”<sup>20</sup> Realizing the inadequacies of observer status, President Bush appointed General (Retired) Joseph Ralston as Special Envoy for countering the PKK in September 2006. This adroit move represented a responsible U.S. diplomatic effort to quell U.S.-Turkey tensions. General Ralston’s purpose and intent was to get the governments of Iraq, Turkey, and the U.S. all working together effectively to counter the PKK. He met with key leaders and declared, “It is unacceptable for Iraq territory to

provide a safe haven for the PKK.”<sup>21</sup> Recognizing the threat and building diplomacy is critical to reaffirming support, however, diplomacy without the other elements of national power and international support will not eliminate PKK capabilities.

In addition to efforts by General Ralston, U.S. State Department (DOS) spokesperson Sean McCormack told reporters the U.S. would continue to work hard to avoid a Turkish cross-border incursion. Resolving the PKK issue remains a priority with a desired outcome of Turks and Iraqis working together.<sup>22</sup> In 2007,

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice paid a visit to try to convince Turkey that the PKK threat could be addressed by intelligence sharing; limiting the movements of PKK fighters; stopping the flow of supplies and oil to the rebels; closing PKK offices in northern Iraq; and arresting those thought to be responsible for the recent attacks. These are steps that Ankara has largely dismissed as being too little, too late.<sup>23</sup>

Involving the Secretary of State and continuing a discourse with Turkish officials represents responsible diplomacy, however, the situation remains unresolved.

Realizing diplomacy is not achieving the desired endstate, Washington is providing Turkey with imaging and communications intercepts, to facilitate limited Turkish strikes against PKK targets.<sup>24</sup> These efforts temporarily reduced tensions between the U.S. and Turkey; however, Turkey is now conducting cross-border land (using small-units) and air attacks against suspected PKK bases in the Kandil Mountains located in northeast Iraq. These engagements have angered both the KRG and the nascent Iraqi leadership, which comprises several senior ranking Kurdish officials. Analysts at OxResearch stated that due to the closely-knit, large extended families in southeast Turkey nearly every Kurd has a relative who was a past or current member of the PKK. Even if Kurds disliked PKK actions and methods, they still respect the PKK for attempting to pursue Kurdish rights.<sup>25</sup>

## Conflict, Loyalists, and Business

In 2002, the European Union added the PKK to their foreign terrorist list and the U.S. followed in 2004. Soon after, Britain labeled the PKK as one of the world's "bloodiest" terrorist organizations.<sup>26</sup> Germany prohibited the PKK from operating within its borders as early as 1993 because of the problems associated with the organization. Imposing the ban did not eliminate the threat; it actually caused many Kurds to think Germany supported Turkey. By 1995, German intelligence officials claimed, "the number of PKK supporters had doubled since the ban took effect," then in 1996 Ocalan pronounced, "Germany has declared war on the PKK. We can fight back. Every Kurd is a potential suicide bomber."<sup>27</sup> The deleterious effects caused by continued Kurdish dissidence is prevalent still.

Although captured in 1999, Abdullah Ocalan, continues to proselytize militant ideology to sustain the insurgency. Considered a pernicious and charismatic leader, he continues to serve as their leader although imprisoned for life. During trial testimony in 2003, Ocalan, along with other imprisoned PKK leaders, went on record stating the PKK had relied heavily on various transnational organized criminal endeavors to fund its operations, and many of its Kurdish members were using the excuse of Kurdish political descent as the reason for their conducting these illegal ventures.<sup>28</sup>

According to Roth and Sever (2007), when the Soviet Union collapsed, the PKK fundamentally transitioned from an insurgent-terrorist group to a transnational criminal element in order to sustain funding for its deleterious activities. This transition spurred numerous criminal activities accounting for an estimated \$86 million U.S. dollars by the late 1990s.<sup>29</sup> Additionally, within the Kurdish expatriate communities in Europe, fund-drives yielded nearly \$30 million dollars with another \$20 million raised from concerts,

festivals, magazine subscriptions and plays staged by PKK activists.<sup>30</sup> Although banned in 1995, the PKK still managed to establish a control center in Germany to orchestrate its activities. It started in the early 1960s, because of the Kurdish-Turkey war, when an estimated 400,000 Kurds escaped to Germany.<sup>31</sup> Because of the political strife with Turkey, many loyal expatriates continue to provide funds to the PKK in the name of Kurdish autonomy.

To achieve the desired effect, terrorist actions require armaments and explosives, and the PKK has access to both. Analysts at OxResearch claim the PKK has substantial stocks of semi-automatic rifles, grenades, land mines, machine guns, rocket-propelled grenades, and A4 and C4 explosives, but no heavy weaponry. Most of the weapons purchased appear to come from the Iraqi black market, particularly from former military stocks.<sup>32</sup> To acquire weapons and explosives requires extensive funding, thus, a nexus forms between PKK arms dealing-procurement and illegal activities.

Since the 1990s, the principle method the PKK uses to acquire its funding is through illegal drug activities. On July 31, 1995 in the Turkish daily *Cumhuriyet*, the Bavarian minister Gunter Beckstein stated, the PKK now controls the European drug market. According to the U.S. State Department's *The International Narcotics Control Strategy*,<sup>33</sup> released in 1996 (and again in 1998 and 1999) the PKK is heavily involved in heroin production and trafficking to support many of its terrorist activities. Moreover, the PKK enforced a so-called revolutionary tax on narcotics traffickers and refiners to support their terrorist actions.<sup>34</sup> In fact, the narcotics industry is so important to the PKK that according to Glenn E. Curtis and Tara Karacan (2002), the PKK now resembles a

“multinational business organization involved in all phases of the illegal narcotics industry, from production to retail distribution.”<sup>35</sup> In addition to the narcotics industry, other PKK lucrative transnational criminal activities include human smuggling, extortion, arson, money laundering, and blackmail.

To sustain their cause the PKK continues to exploit and recruit the impoverished and generally uneducated public. These audiences lack purpose and are vulnerable to nationalistic ideologies. Turkish officials profess that rather than enlisting to support the ideology of nationalism, the PKK implement a threat of force and “brainwashing” during training sessions as methods to solicit new recruits. In June 2001, “the *Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers*, a nongovernmental organization (NGO), reported that children as young as 7 years old had been kidnapped from Kurdish families and indoctrinated into being child soldiers.”<sup>36</sup>

### New Theories and Options

Metz (2007) stated, “The idea is that political grievance may instigate an insurgency but, as a conflict progresses, economic motives play a larger role, eventually even dominating...” Essentially, “conflict gives insurgents access to money and resources out of proportion to what they would have in peacetime.”<sup>37</sup> Once a small and impoverished insurgent group, the PKK is now well organized, trained, and financially versatile. It is no longer dependent on just local support to achieve its goals. What is occurring is a shift in ideas transitioning their “center of gravity” from a populace support base to a monetary one. Metz (2007) also noted, as insurgencies evolve within a society, organized crime becomes more prevalent. The proclivity of an insurgency (i.e., PKK) is to reinforce terrorist tactics in the name of a political ideology while maintaining



lucrative profits from numerous criminal activities. Criminal activities reduce the need for public financial and logistical support by providing the insurgent leadership essential funding, which alleviates financial hardships but affirms corruption.<sup>38</sup> This is now happening to the PKK. Moreover, it appears that the PKK senior leadership desires just enough notoriety, with its terrorist actions, to sustain their cause in the eyes of Kurdish loyalists through international media.

There are several options U.S. policy makers should consider when assessing strategies against the PKK. The first option -- sustaining the current policy -- will continue to alleviate Turkish intervention in the short-term but it will not resolve the PKK situation. The State Department continues to engage the Turks, Iraqis, and Kurds through a special envoy and other U.S. representatives, however, diplomacy has already proven that it is not enough to quell tensions. Additionally, the U.S. will continue to provide intelligence information on PKK targets located in northern Iraq; however, this has the potential to heighten tension in the region because the U.S. has no policy to stop Turkish attacks. Although, the U.S. does not favor intervention from a NATO ally, it has yet to intervene. With the U.S. engaged within two areas of operation (Iraq and Afghanistan), militarily it will become extremely difficult to enforce any military action if a regional conflict develops. Ihsan Dagi (2007) noted the PKK is highly resilient and it will take more than security measures to defeat it.<sup>39</sup>

A second option utilizing the KRG to intervene and engage the PKK to stop its terrorist activities has merit; however, the KRG has resisted provocation against the PKK. The U.S.-Kurdish relationship is favorable but this relationship is not enough to garner the type of KRG resources needed to conduct a counterinsurgency effort.

According to analysts at OxResearch, The KRG “lacks the resources to stage a military operation to dismantle its [PKK’s] camps and fears that any attempt to do so could result in a prolonged conflict which could destabilize the entire KRG region.”<sup>40</sup>

Leadership focus within the KRG is on economic growth and gaining a voice in the Iraqi government, so the U.S. should not expect the level of support needed to thwart the PKK.

### Recommendations

To eradicate the PKK insurgent-terrorist threat, U.S. senior officials need to institute an aggressive U.S. policy and counterinsurgency strategy, which employs the elements of national and international correlating powers. By integrating and synchronizing resources and assets associated with -- diplomacy, information, military, economics, finance, intelligence, and law enforcement -- the U.S. could strengthen alliances with the international community and implement an effective multi-national strategy to eliminate the PKK. Steven Metz and Raymond Millen (2006) noted it is extremely difficult to destroy insurgent networks, but understanding how insurgent groups function reveals vulnerabilities to exploit. Operations against such groups should focus on “fracturing, delinking, and deresourcing” (i.e., PKK), so it becomes ineffective and vulnerable to elimination.<sup>41</sup> Exploiting vulnerabilities and focusing on fracturing, delinking, and deresourcing aspects of the PKK will serve to underpin policy objectives. To achieve success will require constructing an organization integrated with international support and capable of implementing and synchronizing elements of national and multi-national power into a deliberate counterinsurgency strategy against

the PKK. The recommended organizational structure for such a strategy would be an International PKK Taskforce (IPKKTF).

The IPKKTF charter should consist of interagency representatives from the U.S., Turkey, KRG, Iraq, Europe and the United Nations (UN). As a taskforce, the IPKKTF would have the ability to implement action and policy. Through unity of effort, the organization could capitalize on expertise, resources, and assets to achieve the desired endstate. Since diplomacy is critical to building necessary relationships, the lead agency within the U.S. government to construct and lead the IPKKTF should be DOS. After 9/11, DOS instituted key program offices designed to envelop the interagency process and implement a cohesive strategy to defeat terrorism. Strategy implementation requires experience in understanding terrorism and this responsibility should fall upon DOS's Office for the Coordinator for Counterterrorism (S/CT). The mission of the S/CT is to develop and lead a worldwide effort to combat terrorism using all instruments of statecraft (elements of national power), and to provide foreign policy oversight and guidance to all international and governmental counterterrorism activities. As an interagency organization, it is comprised of personnel from multiple bureaus, agencies, and departments within the U.S. government.<sup>42</sup>

Serving in the leadership role for the IPKKTF, the S/CT would interact with key agencies to include Department of Defense, Department of Treasury, Department of Justice (DOJ), National Counterterrorism Center,<sup>43</sup> and the Central Intelligence Agency. The S/CT also has the ability to forge partnerships with foreign nations, multilateral organizations, and non-state actors to advance counterterrorism objectives and U.S. national security.<sup>44</sup> Within the international community, the IPKKTF would build

intergovernmental relationships with Ministries of Foreign Affairs from Turkey, France, Germany, and other governments threatened by PKK terrorist and transnational criminal activities. The IPPKTF should foster a relationship with United Kingdom's Foreign and Commonwealth Office and spend considerable time integrating the several key UN organizations within its charter. One such UN organization would be the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Taskforce (CTITF).<sup>45</sup> A second would be the UN Office on Drugs and Crime,<sup>46</sup> which has an array of technical tools to assist countries in their fight against terrorism. Integrating The International Criminal Police Organization – INTERPOL,<sup>47</sup> a member of the CTITF, would provide a wealth of law enforcement resources and assets to degrade the transnational criminal elements supporting the PKK. By utilizing and integrating all the various agencies listed, the IPPKTF would become a versatile and responsive organization capable of successfully executing a counterinsurgency strategy, thus, eliminating PKK terrorist threats, reducing transnational criminal activities and reestablishing regional stability.

The next element important to IPPKTF success involves implementation and synchronization of the information element of power, which entails strategic communications (SC) and information operations (IO). The effects of globalization and ubiquitous media coverage create near-real time exposure, which the IPPKTF would use to their advantage to dispel propaganda created by the PKK. Effectively using SC and IO, the IPPKTF could shape global perceptions by identifying the PKK as both a regional and global threat, thus, fracturing the organization by delinking internal and external support relationships. According to U.S. Joint doctrine, SC integrates U.S. governmental level “programs, plans, themes, and messages” synchronized with the

elements of national power.<sup>48</sup> A correlating result would also need to occur within the international organizations. Each element of power – diplomacy, military, economic, intelligence, financial, and law enforcement – would inculcate IO capabilities to support IPKKTF efforts. Incorporating similar skill sets within the international community could achieve similar results once incorporated into international elements of power. The critical aspect of SC entails accuracy and legitimacy, which is important to ensure all supporting governments understand the intent to garner national and international support. The wrong message or theme could strengthen the PKK's cause socially and economically. Conversely, IO could also identify new programs to reinforce economic growth while exposing criminal elements of the PKK. Key to success for the IPKKTF resides in effectively using multiple international media outlets to dispelling propaganda while reinforcing positive aspects of the SC and IO to the international community. To counter harmful PKK propaganda requires an aggressive and synchronized IO strategy.

The IO strategy, an element of SC exploits the use of soft power as the means to gain information superiority against an adversary (i.e., PKK). Joint Publication 3-13 notes the modern information environment is highly complex; therefore, when using IO the user needs to align the message with the broader national security policy and strategic objectives.<sup>49</sup> In this context, IO provides the IPKKTF the capability to “influence, disrupt, corrupt and usurp” adversaries while protecting their own systems.<sup>50</sup> Several core IO tasks applicable to use against the PKK include electronic warfare (EW) and psychological operations (PSYOPS).

Employing EW provides an advantage to the IPKKTF by intercepting or interfering with electronic mediums. This capability provides valuable information, which could

translate into intelligence to use against the PKK. Numerous security parameters exist within the cyber and electronic realm. However, the interagency connectivity of the IPKKTF would be able to integrate the level of technical support required. For example, organizations exist within the Department of Defense and Department of Justice with these capabilities as well as corresponding international agencies. The unique aspect of EW would require compartmentalization for security reasons.

A second core task, PSYOPS gives the IPKKTF the capability to control messages and materials to affect desired results. PSYOPS messages would require clearance at the national level to maintain credibility with audiences. Once cleared, leaflet drops could influence audiences along with radio and media outlets to proselytize the IPKKTF message. U.S. PSYOPS teams have also trained with foreign militaries in the same skill sets and have the capability to integrate those forces to accomplish similar tasks. The use of country teams within DOS could provide valuable cultural level expertise to IO strategies. The ambassador and staff have access to the populace and government leadership, and understand regional challenges and effects, which are important for building a PSYOPS campaign.

When utilized, the military element of power could fracture the PKK as an organization in the northern Iraq. This would require integration, synchronization, and unity of effort with the IPKKTF. The military organization with the expertise and interagency experience, which could effectively work and support IPKKTF efforts, resides within the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). For integration to succeed, USSOCOM would provide a liaison team to work with the IPKKTF. Once established, the liaison team would serve as the coordinating element

between the IPKKTF and the Special Operations forces (SOF)<sup>51</sup> on the ground in northern Iraq. The reason for selecting USSOCOM to lead the military effort is that, in 2005, it became the supported command for Global War on Terror. As the supported command, it is responsible for “planning, synchronizing, and as directed, executing global operations against terrorist networks.”<sup>52</sup> USSOCOM has counterterrorism and counterinsurgency experience, and it understands international-interagency synergy, which is used to reinforce relationships needed to build a global network to combat terrorism.<sup>53</sup> If authorized by the IPKKTF, other (like) SOF forces within the international community could participate as a combined force under USSOCOM direction. U.S. SOF train with multiple foreign SOF forces and could integrate them into military actions in northern Iraq as required. By employing Special Forces units, the IPKKTF would be able to maintain a low military signature, build relationships within the KRG, and maintain cultural awareness while degrading PKK capabilities.

Integrating the economic and financial elements of national and international power is extremely critical to delinking and deresourcing the PKK. Chiarelli and Smith (2007) recommended, “We should look to apply similar models of private sector/government integration on future operations when the critical means of achieving our objectives fall outside traditional military roles....Our Nation’s economic power is often more important than its military power in ensuring strategic security.”<sup>54</sup>

One method to delink the PKK entails utilizing DOS resources (i.e., Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs (EEB)) and other interagency assets. The EEB mission is to promote economic prosperity at home and abroad. The way it accomplishes this is by employing all U.S. economic engagement tools such as economic stimulus incentive

programs through loans and training.<sup>55</sup> These programs could stimulate trade and employment to impoverished regional Kurds, thus, removing incentives for future PKK recruits.

The UN also has a myriad of organizations and economic commissions designed to increase economic growth, which the IPKKTf could integrate. These include the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, and International Fund for Agricultural Development. These organizations focus on understanding the social and economic impacts to regional growth, and have the capability to induce programs to improve those conditions. Metz (2007) stated, “Hence economic assistance and job training are as important to counterinsurgency as political reform. Businesses started and jobs created are as much “indicators of success” as insurgents killed or intelligence provided.”<sup>56</sup>

To “deresource” the PKK requires financial sanctions, the freezing of accounts and the use of aggressive law enforcement measures to interdict illegal transactions. The Achilles heel of an insurgent-terrorist organization is its financial resource requirements and means to conduct their entrepreneurial enterprises. Investing the resources and assets to counter the flow of resources from the PKK’s transnational criminal organizations and disrupting the flow of funding from expatriates would reduce future terrorist attacks. According to Robin Wright (2008), “the Treasury Department can impose sanctions under Executive Order 13438, which targets insurgents and militia groups. It can legally freeze any assets – such as property or financial holdings – under U.S. jurisdiction or any transactions with U.S. citizens or entities.”<sup>57</sup> Applying this executive order and integrating the S/CT and its interagency connections would provide



the means for the IPKKTF to oversee this requirement. The World Bank<sup>58</sup> is another valuable agency with resources and capabilities to aid IPKKTF efforts by intervening and disrupting PKK terrorist financial activities. Without supporters and funding, the PKK could not afford the necessary transportation to move to a target area or be able to acquire the essential weapons and logistics needed to execute terrorist acts.

The element of intelligence is already proving its worth due to U.S. decisions to provide key intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance information on suspected PKK base camps to the Turkish government. Intelligence is the one element critically linked to security, which reinforces IPKKTF counterinsurgency strategy and its goal of eliminating the PKK. Multiple national intelligence agencies, including U.S., could provide near real-time information on PKK activities. Agencies within the U.S. include the Central Intelligence Agency, Defense Intelligence Agency, National Security Agency, and Federal Bureau Investigation. Internationally the intelligence community, which could provide support to IPKKTF, includes MI-6 Secret Intelligence Service and National Criminal Intelligence Service in the United Kingdom, the Federal Intelligence Service in Germany, the Director of Military Intelligence in France, and the Turkish Milli-Istihbarat Teskilati (National Intelligence Agency). By integrating intelligence with the elements of power, the IPKKTF could capitalize on numerous aspects of each element to reinforce membership to analyze accurate and timely information to interdict military targets, and economically gain the advantage by intercepting transnational criminals and activities, while reinforcing law enforcement efforts.

The final element of national power, law enforcement operations could have a decisive impact against the PKK. Integrated with IO and intelligence, law enforcement

agencies (LEA) within the U.S. and international community could effectively interdict and arrest transnational criminals conducting narcotic trafficking, extortion, money laundering, human smuggling and other related crimes supporting the PKK. Muckian (2006-2007) noted, "A better paradigm for a counter-insurgency strategy may be found in studying law enforcement operations against criminal organizations. Criminal networks, like insurgencies, are very hard to completely eradicate. Law enforcement strategies, therefore, often focus on disrupting the network's ability to function rather than its destruction."<sup>59</sup> Disrupting the PKK network's functional abilities would enhance security and stability on the northern border of Iraq and within the Kurdish communities. Metz (2007) noted, that a mature "counterinsurgency campaign needs to resemble counter-organized crime effort or a counter-gang program." These type programs require law enforcement agencies to lead the counterinsurgency effort.<sup>60</sup> By integrating international agencies (i.e., INTERPOL) with DOJ resources, the IPKKTf could integrate support into its information operations and finance interdiction activities, which could reduce PKK terrorist acts. Agencies within DOJ include the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Both agencies maintain offices abroad in cooperation with international agencies to support LEA criminal-terrorist interdiction efforts. Principally, the DEA has agents working alongside international agents in Europe and Asia to prosecute illegal drug trafficking and distributing.

In terms of stability, use of LEA personnel, active or retired is a resource for training Kurds to increase security on the northern border of Iraq. These training programs could stimulate economic growth by providing security type jobs in the region.

SOF has trained with various law enforcement agencies and could interface and provide support. Implementing economic incentive programs and interdicting criminal-terrorist insurgents would reinforce security and stability in the region, and have a positive impact on the economies in Europe.

### Conclusion

The PKK is a recognized terrorist organization by the U.S. and the international community. It continues to threaten regional stability in northern Iraq through terrorist actions, and through its associations with transnational criminal organizations, it now threatens economic stability in Europe. Current USG policy against the PKK is achieving short-term goals with Turkey; however, achieving long-term regional stability will require the elimination of PKK terrorist capabilities and their known links to terrorist-transnational criminal organizations. Both President Bush and the Turkish Prime Minister want to eliminate the PKK. In order to comply with President Bush's policy, senior policy makers will need to reassess their strategies and take a more committed position to eradicate the PKK. As stated in the recommendation, the implementation of an International PKK Taskforce (IPKKTF) with the authority to implement policy and actions using the elements of national and multi-national power could effectively eliminate the PKK as a terrorist and transnational criminal threat. The IPKKITF would demonstrate U.S. resolve and commitment to allies on a global scale. The NSS (2007) states,

The fight must be taken to the enemy, to keep them on the run. To succeed in our own efforts, we need the support and concerted action of friends and allies. We must join with others to deny the terrorists what they need to survive: safe haven, financial support, and the support and protection that certain nation-states historically have given them.<sup>61</sup>

By effectively synchronizing national and international interagency resources and assets, the IPKKTF will fracture, delink and deresource the PKK, thus, eliminating the PKK threat to regional stability and global economic corruption. This effort primarily uses soft power to succeed against the PKK. Military involvement (hard power) would be limited to SOF units with unique irregular warfare capabilities to use against the PKK. As the Honorable Colin Powell (2004) stated, “As the President made clear on May 1, 2003, we use all the tools of diplomacy, law enforcement, intelligence, and finance....The use of force has been – and remains – our last resort.”<sup>62</sup>

For the past several months, the Turkish military has conducted both air and limited ground attacks against PKK targets, but this will not eliminate the PKK. It may have some affect towards fracturing the PKK, but these actions will not delink or deresource their efforts. Turkey is concerned about Kurdish autonomy and the situation with the PKK only fuels aggression. By implementing aggressive diplomacy through SC and an effective IO campaign, the IPKKTF could build alliances and media support against the PKK. Militarily, the use of SOF could restrict terrorist movements and reduce capabilities through PKK interdiction. Economics and finance would build and strengthen regional economies while disrupting PKK finance methods. Intelligence would continue to support all elements of national and international power to disrupt the PKK power base. Finally, the use of law enforcement can interdict and arrest those conducting transnational criminal activities to support the PKK, while training regional Kurds in checkpoint security operations at border crossings.

There are a myriad of tasks to coordinate for IPKKTF support to succeed. Once successful the Turkish government would have to reevaluate its governmental and

military policy concerning troops on the northern Iraq border. Stability and security could again gain momentum. Additionally, interdicting the PKK's ability to manage their legal and illegal funding streams would restore a sense of assurance to our European allies. A threat to European economies is a threat to US economies. Powell (2004) commented, "Everyone knows America and Europe needs each other..."<sup>63</sup>

Situational threats, like those posed by the PKK, are becoming more prevalent within the 21<sup>st</sup> century. If regional stability, security, and growth are to continue then the USG needs to align its policies and strategies internationally to achieve effective results. Chiarelli with Smith (2007) noted, "In the increasing interconnected, interdependent, and dangerous world we live in, the U.S. cannot assume that it will be able to retreat from other nations' problems for very long."<sup>64</sup> This is becoming evident regarding the Turkey, KRG, Iraq, and PKK situation in northern Iraq. Although the US National Security Strategy is clear concerning U.S. desires to eliminate terrorism, what is not clear in terms of policy is the level of U.S. intervention. In order to retain regional stability within northern Iraq and reaffirm alliances the USG needs to reassess its strategies, increase the level of intervention, and employ all its elements of power against the PKK. As a future concern to USG policy makers and importance to Kurdish issues, Aliza Marcus (2007) noted, "The crisis in Iraq and tensions over potential Kurdish separatist interests there underscore that the region's some 28 million Kurds will long remain a source of instability for the governments that rule them and the western powers that try to influence events there."<sup>65</sup>

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> In order to gain a new identity the PKK formally changed its name to Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress (KADEK) on 16 April 2002. However, the organization is still commonly referred to as the PKK. See "Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK)/Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress," *Military Periscope* (January 2007); [database on-line]; available from Military Periscope; accessed 3 December 2007.

<sup>2</sup> "Turkey Sets Sights On Elimination of PKK," *Military Periscope* (13 November 2007); [database on-line]; available from Military Periscope; accessed 3 December 2007. Hereafter cited as "Turkey Sets Sights On Elimination of PKK,".

<sup>3</sup> "Turkey: Neutralizing PKK requires KRG engagement," *OxResearch: Oxford Analytica* (14 November 2007); [database on-line]; available from ProQuest; accessed 7 December 2007. Hereafter cited as "Turkey: Neutralizing PKK requires KRG engagement,"

<sup>4</sup> Mitchel P. Roth and Murat Sever, "The Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) as Criminal Syndicate: Funding Terrorism through Organized Crime," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 30 (October 2007): [database on-line], available from InformaWorld, Taylor and Francis; accessed 25 October 2007, 901.

<sup>5</sup> George W. Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, March 2006), 12.

<sup>6</sup> The Kurds living in northern Iraq established the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) following the successful US invasion and overthrow of Saddam Hussein. It is regional government for the Kurdistan Region in northern Iraq. As part a federal and democratic Iraq, the KRG is committed to the Constitution and respects all the decisions and laws of the Iraqi Parliament. See "Kurdistan Region Raises New Iraqi Flag," Kurdistan Regional Government Press Release 10 February 2008, available from <http://www.krg.org/articles/Detail.asp?1ngnr=12&sman=02010100&rnr=223&anr=22700>; Internet; accessed on 11 February 2008.

<sup>7</sup> John Pike, "Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)," 21 May 2004, linked from *Federation of American Scientists Home Page* at "Liberation Movements, Terrorist Organizations, Substance Cartels, and Other Para-State Entities," available from <http://www.fas.org/irp/world/para/pkk.htm>; Internet; accessed 11 February 2008.

<sup>8</sup> Glenn E. Curtis and Tara Karacan, *The Nexus Among Terrorists, Narcotics Traffickers, Weapons Proliferators, and Organized Crime Networks in Western Europe* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, Federal Research Division, December 2002), 18-19.

<sup>9</sup> Aliza Marcus, *Blood and Belief* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 230.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 303.

<sup>11</sup> Sabrina Tavernise, "Is The Rugged North of Iraq, Kurdish Rebels Flout Turkey," *New York Times*, 29 October 2007 [newspaper on-line]; available from <http://ebird.afis.mil/ebfiles/e20071029556647.html>; Internet; accessed 29 October 2007.

<sup>12</sup> Daniel Fata, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Europe and NATO, *The U.S. Turkey Relationship*, testimony before U.S. Congress House, Committee on Foreign Affairs, 15 March 2007.

<sup>13</sup> Audrey K. Cronin, *Foreign Terrorist Organizations* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, 6 February 2004).

<sup>14</sup> "Turkey Sets Sights On Elimination of PKK,"

<sup>15</sup> Ellen Knickmeyer, "Bombing Targets Troops In Turkey's Kurdish Area, 5 Civilians Die," *Washington Post*, 4 January 2008 [newspaper on-line]; available from <http://ebird.afis.mil/cgi-bin/ebird/displaydata.pl?Requested=/ebfiles/e20080104571073.html>; Internet; accessed 4 January 2008.

<sup>16</sup> Bill Park, "Iraq's Kurds and Turkey: Challenges for US Policy," *Parameters* 34 (Autumn 2004): [database on-line]; available from ProQuest; accessed 20 November 2007.

<sup>17</sup> Steven Metz, *RETHINKING INSURGENCY* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 21 June 2007), 50.

<sup>18</sup> Tavernise.

<sup>19</sup> The hands-off approach by US officials during the crackdown periods between Kurds, Iraqis, and Turks, occurred in the 1980s and 1990s. See Kevin McKiernan, *The Kurds* (New York, N.Y.: St. Martins Press, 2006), 11, 305.

<sup>20</sup> Mathew Bryza, Deputy Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs, "U.S. Policy Towards Turkey," 11 May 2007; available from <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/85595.htm>; Internet; accessed 7 December 2007.

<sup>21</sup> General (Ret) Joseph Ralston, U.S. Special Envoy for Countering the PKK, "U.S. Consultations with Turkey and Iraq on Countering the PKK," 27 September 2006; available from <http://fpc.state.gov/fpc/73275.htm>; Internet; accessed 7 December 2007.

<sup>22</sup> Robin Wright and Michael Abramowitz, "U.S. Warns Iraq to halt Rebel Raids on Turkey; Kurdish Attacks Prompt Border Troop Buildup," *Washington Post* (23 October 2007): [database on-line]; available from ProQuest; accessed 7 December 2007.

<sup>23</sup> "Turkey Sets Sights On Elimination of PKK,"

<sup>24</sup> "Turkey: Neutralizing PKK requires KRG engagement,"

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Roth and Sever, 901, 913.

<sup>27</sup> Yassin Musharbash, "PKK Circumvents Ban in Germany," *Spiegel Online International*, 20 October 2008; [journal on-line]; available from <http://www.spiegel.de/International/germany/0,1518,514379,00.html>; Internet; accessed 9 February 2008.

<sup>28</sup> Roth and Sever, 908.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 906.

<sup>30</sup> Marcus, 230.

<sup>31</sup> McKiernan, 129.

<sup>32</sup> "Turkey: Neutralizing PKK requires KRG engagement,"

<sup>33</sup> The U.S. Department of State's *International Narcotics Control Strategy* (INCSR) is due to Congress by March 1st annually. The INCSR is the United States Government's country-by-country two-volume report that describes the efforts to attack all aspects of the international drug trade, chemical control, money laundering and financial crimes. See, "Narcotics Control Reports," linked from *U.S. Department of State Home Page*, available from <http://www.state.gov/p/inl/rls/nrcrpt/>; Internet; accessed 25 January 2008.

<sup>34</sup> Roth and Sever, 907.

<sup>35</sup> Curtis and Karacan, 21.

<sup>36</sup> Roth and Sever, 906.

<sup>37</sup> Metz, 44.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ihsan Dagi, "Rights and Wrongs in the fight against the PKK," *TODAY'S ZAMAN*, 01 November 2007; available from <http://todayszaman.com/tz-web/yazarDetay.do?haberno=12597>; Internet; accessed 1 November 2007.

<sup>40</sup> "Turkey: Neutralizing PKK requires KRG engagement,"

<sup>41</sup> Martin J. Muckian, "Structural Vulnerabilities of Networked Insurgencies: Adapting to the New Adversary," *Parameters* 34 (Winter 2006-2007): 23.

<sup>42</sup> "Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism: Our Mission," linked from *U.S. Department of State Home Page*, available from <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/about/c16570.htm>; Internet; accessed 26 January 2008.

<sup>43</sup> In 2004, the U.S. Government created the National Counterterrorism Center (NCC) for the purpose of integrating and analyzing all intelligence pertaining to terrorism and counter-terrorism. Additionally, it has capability to conduct strategic operational planning for U.S. Government. See "About the National Counterterrorism Center," linked from *National Counterterrorism Center Home Page*, available from [http://www.nctc.gov/about\\_us/about\\_nctc.html](http://www.nctc.gov/about_us/about_nctc.html); Internet; accessed 26 January 2008.

<sup>44</sup> "Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism," linked from the *U.S. Department of State Home Page*, available from <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/>; Internet; accessed 26 January 2008.



<sup>45</sup> The Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, established in 2005, works to ensure overall coordination and coherence among at least two dozen entities throughout the United Nations involved in counter-terrorism. See Department of Public Information, *UN Action to Counter Terrorism: Implementing the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy*, Fact Sheet (New York: Department of Public Information, Peace and Security, May 2007); available from [http://un.org/terrorism/pdfs/CT\\_factsheet\\_may2007x.pdf](http://un.org/terrorism/pdfs/CT_factsheet_may2007x.pdf); Internet; accessed 9 February 2008.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has assisted more than 125 countries in becoming parties to and implementing the universal instruments related to the prevention and suppression of international terrorism and in strengthening international cooperation mechanisms in criminal matters related to terrorism, including through national capacity building.

<sup>47</sup> Interpol is the world's largest international police organization, with 186 member countries. Created in 1923, it facilitates cross-border police cooperation, and supports and assists all organizations, authorities, and services with the mission to prevent or combat international crime. See "About Interpol," linked from *INTERPOL Home Page*, available from <http://www.interpol.int/public/icpo/default.asp>; Internet; accessed 9 February 2008.

<sup>48</sup> U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Information Operations*, Joint Publication 3-13 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, 13 February 2006), 1-10.

<sup>49</sup> Joint Publication 3-13, I-8.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., I-1.

<sup>51</sup> U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) is responsible to train, resource, and organize Special Operations Forces (SOF). SOF forces assigned to USSOCOM include Army Special Operations Command, Navy Special Warfare Command, Air Force Special Operations Command, and Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command. Mission of USSOCOM is to provide fully capable Special Operations Forces to defend the United States and its interests. Plan and synchronize operations against terrorist networks. See "Command Mission," linked from *U.S. Special Operations Command Home Page*, available from [http://www.socom.mil/Docs/Command\\_Mission\\_\\_26112007.pdf](http://www.socom.mil/Docs/Command_Mission__26112007.pdf); Internet; accessed 22 February 2008.

<sup>52</sup> U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *National Military Strategic Plan for the War on Terrorism* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1 February 2006), 29.

<sup>53</sup> U.S. Special Operations Command, *USSOCOM Posture Statement 2007* (Tampa, F.L.: MacDill Air Force Base, 2007), 1.

<sup>54</sup> Peter W. Chiarelli and Stephen M. Smith, "Learning from Modern Wars: The Imperatives of Preparing for a Dangerous Future," *Military Review* 87 (September-October 2007): 6. Lieutenant General Peter Chiarelli, U.S. Army, is the senior military assistant to the Secretary of Defense. Major Stephen Smith, U.S. Army, is a military assistant in the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

<sup>55</sup> "Bureau of Economic, Energy, and Business Affairs," linked from *U.S. Department of State Home Page*, available from <http://www.state.gov/e/eeb/>; Internet; accessed 30 January 2008.

<sup>56</sup> Metz, 53.

<sup>57</sup> Robin Wright, "Top Iranian General Hit With Sanctions," *Washington Post*, 10 January 2008 [newspaper on-line]; available from <http://ebird.afis.mil/cgi-bin/ebird/display.pl?Requested=/ebfiles/e20080110572324.html>; Internet; accessed 10 January 2008.

<sup>58</sup> The World Bank has conducted 31 assessments – 11 jointly with the IMF – on Anti-Money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) compliance since 2001. It has undertaken studies on bilateral remittance corridors which provide sender and receiving countries with new information on remittance. This information provides the basis for review of policies to promote increased cash flows at lower costs for countries, while enabling better compliance with AML/CFT standards. See Department of Public Information, *UN Action to Counter Terrorism: Implementing the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy*

<sup>59</sup> Muckian, 19.

<sup>60</sup> Metz, 52.

<sup>61</sup> Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, 8.

<sup>62</sup> Colin L. Powell, "The Craft of Diplomacy," *Wilson Quarterly* 28 (Summer 2004): 63.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>64</sup> Chiarelli and Smith, 3.

<sup>65</sup> Marcus, 3.

